

PRESS RELEASE

Congressman John Conyers, Jr.

**Fourteenth District, Michigan
Ranking Member, Committee on the Judiciary
Dean, Congressional Black Caucus**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
April 4, 2003**

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CONYERS CHAIRS TELECOMMUNICATIONS FORUM

PLEDGES MORE HEARINGS, POSSIBLE LEGISLATION TO PROTECT CONSUMERS

Congressman John Conyers, Jr., Ranking Member of the House Judiciary Committee issued the following statement regarding today's forum on telecommunications:

"Today's hearing offers the public and the Congress an excellent opportunity to examine the state of competition in the telecommunications industry, particularly in Michigan.

Certainly, we have come a long way in terms of appreciating the importance of competition and antitrust in this critical industry. Twenty years ago, there was essentially one mega-monopoly controlling what we called the telephone industry – Ma Bell. In 1982 the DC District court split Ma Bell up and we finally got competition in manufacturing and long distance. In 1996, on a bipartisan basis, we were finally able to take the next step and introduce real and viable competition in the local loop.

Michigan is a shining example of how competition can result in tangible benefits to consumers. Recently, there were over 150 telecom competitors in the Michigan market. Since competitors started offering local telephone service in Michigan, local phone rates have come down by 30% resulting in an annual savings of \$26 million for consumers. But we cannot stop there. Threats to competition abound and it will take all of our efforts to make sure that an industry born in monopoly in the 20th century is not reborn in monopoly in the 21st century as a result of regulatory or legal failings.

I plan on remaining ever vigilant in safeguarding the gains we have made and working to foster even more competition so that we can create more jobs and pass on more savings to consumers. I look forward to working with my colleagues on the Judiciary Committee in overseeing this industry and considering legislation where necessary to further these goals."

****STATEMENTS OF THE FORUM PARTICIPANTS ARE AVAILABLE AT:
www.house.gov/judiciary_democrats/demhome**

##JUD-108-4/4/03##